



Public Schools of North Carolina  
State Board of Education  
Department of Public Instruction

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# Report to the General Assembly

*Submitted to*

Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Education

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More at Four  
Pre-Kindergarten Program

*Session Law 2008-181 Section 49.1*  
*(House Bill 2431)*

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**June St. Clair Atkinson, Ed.D., State Superintendent**  
**301 N. Wilmington Street :: Raleigh, North Carolina 27601-2825**

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**More at Four:  
Academic Pre-Kindergarten for North Carolina's  
At-Risk Four-Year-Olds**

**Overview**

- More at Four is a cornerstone program in the Department of Public Instruction's Office of School Readiness. The expansion of state funding for pre-kindergarten over the past eight years has provided for thousands of at-risk four-year-olds to be served in academic pre-kindergarten classrooms, an educational experience they would not have had without this program.
- More at Four is not a child care subsidy program. It is an education program with standards that are equivalent to those for our public schools, including teacher licensure, curriculum and early learning standards, and class size. The Office of School Readiness, under the authority of the State Board of Education, sets the educational standards and expectations for pre-kindergarten implementation statewide. As a result, North Carolina is rated as one of the top two states nationally for state pre-kindergarten program quality by the National Institute of Early Education Research.
- For the 2008-09 school year, More at Four is funded to serve 32,122 at-risk children in over 2,260 classrooms statewide, with 52 percent in public schools, 29 percent in child care centers, and 19 percent in Head Start programs.
- The State Board of Education's goals to improve school performance for at-risk children and ensure that every student graduates necessitate these statewide investments in developing and maintaining academic pre-kindergarten classrooms. The Office of School Readiness maximizes our investments in pre-kindergarten by coordinating and integrating all state and federal funding for preschool, including More at Four, Title I Preschool, Exceptional Children Preschool, Even Start and Head Start.
- The next step for the Department of Public Instruction is to ensure alignment of standards, curriculum and instruction across the critical continuum of early learning that exists from pre-kindergarten through the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (Pre-K-3) that sets the foundation for children's sustained success in our public schools. Children's educational and social gains from high-quality pre-kindergarten are optimized through this alignment and attention to Pre-K-3. This work is underway under the current mandate from the State Board of Education to overhaul the Pre-K-12 Standard Course of Study.

**The More at Four Evaluation**  
<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~mafeval/>

- Since the inception of More at Four, the FPG Child Development Institute at UNC-Chapel Hill has conducted an independent statewide evaluation of the program, including evaluation measures for both program quality and child outcomes. Over these years, the evaluation has found that participating children exhibit significant growth in multiple skill areas (e.g. language, literacy, math and social skills) and that More at Four offers "an important and ameliorative experience for children who otherwise may not have such opportunities in the pre-k year." (Peisner-Feinberg and Schaaf, 2008)



- According to the current evaluation report, **Evaluation of the North Carolina More at Four Pre-kindergarten Program: Performance and Progress in the Seventh Year (2007-2008)**, the evaluation results for 2007-08 indicate overall that the More at Four program has continued to provide services in accord with its goals and program guidelines through the seventh year of operation. The program continues to focus on serving its target group of at-risk and unserved children.

Children have continued to exhibit patterns of substantial growth across key school readiness indicators in the areas of language/literacy, math, general knowledge, and social skills. For children with lower levels of English proficiency, the program has even greater benefits. (Peisner-Feinberg and Schaaf, 2009)

The specific child outcome measures for the More at Four evaluation include:

**Language and literacy**

1. Receptive vocabulary
2. Ability to identify letters and words
3. Knowledge about written language conventions and form and alphabet knowledge
4. Ability to blend sounds to form words and to delete sounds to make other words

**Math**

1. Ability to solve practical math problems including counting, simple addition and subtraction
2. Ability to count in one-to-one correspondence

**Classroom behavior**

1. Social skills
2. Problem behaviors

- A second report submitted by the FPG Child Development Institute, **Study of the Feasibility of Utilizing Comparison-group Designs for Evaluating the North Carolina More at Four Pre-kindergarten Program**, considers six possible comparison-group designs as options for further evaluation of the effectiveness of More at Four. To date, the More at Four evaluation has studied the performance of participating children compared to national standards and differences in performance have been examined for subgroups of children on the basis of levels of risk. The evaluation has also studied the influence of the quality of instructional practices in both pre-k and kindergarten. The More at Four evaluation has not examined a comparison group of similar children.

This report provides information for further consideration on how to conduct a comparison-group evaluation for More at Four. The six options include one experimental and 5 quasi-experimental designs. The report describes the options and rates them according to generalizability, logistical feasibility and relative costs. An experimental design is desirable for its high generalizability, but its feasibility is very low and costs are relatively high. The quasi-experimental options, as outlined in the report, vary in terms of desirability in these categories. (Peisner-Feinberg and Schaaf, 2008)

**Attachments**

Peisner-Feinberg, E.S. & Schaaf, J.M. (2009). *Evaluation of the North Carolina More at Four Pre-kindergarten Program: Performance and Progress in the Seventh Year (2007-2008)*. Chapel Hill, NC: FPG Child Development Institute.

Peisner-Feinberg, E.S. & Schaaf, J.M. (2008). *Study of the Feasibility of Utilizing Comparison-group Designs for Evaluating the North Carolina More at Four Pre-kindergarten Program*. Chapel Hill, NC: FPG Child Development Institute.